American Mortgage on Belgium Covers Live, Going Concern

Frank G. Carpenter Gives Some Motor-Car Views of the Country as a Financial and Industrial Asset—Farms Which Average 37 Bushels of Wheat, 50 Bushels of Barley and 300 Bushels of Potatoes Per Acre—Crops Nursed Like Babies and Every Shock Capped—Elephants in Horse Hide—The Stone Roads of Belgium and What the Debt Might Do for America—How to Be Richer Than Rockefeller. A Card Game on the Volga Which Netted Sixty Millions—Farms Offered for Sheets of Blank Paper—An Austrian Lunatic at Large and His Financial Dilemma.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

BRUSSELS, Belgium.

THE boat had left the Tartar city of Kazan and was steaming slowly toward Samara on its way to the Caspian sea. The passengers had exhausted their stories and gossip and their eyes had grown tired watching the great rafts of lumber drifting down stream. So the four Americans on board had sat down to play bridge. The men at the table were all millionaires. Indeed, each had so much money that his bills bulged out the satchel beside him. The bets were in millions, and they played for ten thousand a point. The game went on with varying fortune, winnings to be cashed in at the end of the voyage.

At last the cry came that the boat was nearing Samara, and they threw their cards on the table and began to count up. The winner was a former governor from the United States, who, I venture, had acquired his great skill in cards by his frequent stays at French Lick. His winnings were just 80,000,000 rubles, an amount which, when I was in Samara during the great famine of some decades ago, would have equaled more than $30,000,000 gold. Now, by the collapse of the Russian currency, it represents no more than $10, or 1,000 cents. Now a single cent equals 40,000 rubles, so that a man is a millionaire if he has 25 cents in his jeans.

At a table in Paris the other night an American gave a dinner with a million-ruble note at each plate as a place card, writing the name of the guest on its face. I have just received a letter from Moscow, the stamp upon which represents 200,000 rubles, or what now equals 5 cents. When I last visited Moscow I could have bought 2,000,000 such stamps for that sum.

This enormous decline of exchange, not only in Russia but also in many other European countries, is trying to the faith of the peasants, and they are hoarding such moneys as they think may survive. Even the French are afraid of the paper francs, and the thrifty peasants have begun to pack away in their woolen stockings the new aluminum-bronze coins, which are now issued for the franc and half franc. They are worth no more than the paper currency, but the people imagine they have intrinsic value.

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BARON KORF, a high Russian official under the czar, tells me that the peasants began to fear the decline of the ruble as soon as the bolsheviks started their printing presses, but they had faith in the czar rubles and believed that their value might come back after this crazy regime had passed away. Therefore, they saved them, hiding the paper in the thatched roofs or digging out a hole under the great brick or stone stoves upon which they sleep at night. As time went on it was found that all the whisky or vodka bottles in which that liquor was sold when the czar government had the monopoly for its manufacture had disappeared. Those bottles were of white glass and of various sizes. The authorities investigated and found that the peasants were stuffing them with czar rubles and burying them, tightly corked, in that greatest of safety deposit vaults, old Mother Earth. The corks keep out the moisture, and the peasants believe that the money will sprout into a crop of real wealth when normalcy returns to their land.

I hear similar stories as to the antics of the peasants in Poland and others of the mushroom republics which some of us think may yet be transformed into sturdy oaks in the international forest. One relates to a peasant who lives not far from Warsaw. He had offered to sell his farm for 50,000,000 Polish marks. Before the transaction was closed he became alarmed at the way the government was rolling out new bills from its presses. So he went to the buyer and said:

"I am afraid of this new money, and I would much prefer to have you give me 50,000,000 sheets of blank paper instead."

"Go away!" said the buyer, who was a shrewd, thrifty Jew. "You are asking twice as much for your farm."

And the deal straightway fell through.

My last story is from Austria, where for several years the krone has been "on the toboggan" and is carrying the country and people to financial destruction. It has dropped 20,000 points within the past week, but is still something under 100,000 per $1. When I passed through Vienna long before the world war every krone was worth more than twenty American cents, and 100,000 would have equaled more than $20,000.

The story relates to a patient who has been kept for some ten years or more in an insane asylum outside Vienna. He is a man of wealth, and the other day, when he escaped, he had one of the old twenty-kronen gold pieces in his pocket. In his wanderings he met a taxi and took a long ride. When the chauffeur demanded his pay the figures on the taxi meter represented 53,000 kronen. The lunatic threw up his hands in despair as he handed over his gold piece, and he doubted even his own insanity and was sure of that of the chauffeur when the latter handed him back bills to the amount of 147,000 kronen as change.

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ALL this is a preface to some investigations I have been making these past two weeks regarding your mortgage on Belgium. It shows why I dare not give you the figures in this European currency, and why all my calculations must be in American dollars and cents. According to figures furnished me by the Treasury Department at Washington on the 15th of last May, Belgium owed the United States just about $429,000,000. It is not much, perhaps, in the total of more than $12,000,000,000 which the several foreign nations owe us, but it represents more than $21 per family, and would be a tidy little sum to put into public improvements if we could have the spot cash. Four hundred and twenty-nine million dollars would make 10,000 miles of new railways at $42,900 a mile. It would make more than 28,000 miles of first-class motor highways at $15,000 a mile, or enough to reach around the world at the equator and build also a first-class Roosevelt route from Seattle to Boston.

With this money that Belgium owes us, which we raised by our liberty bonds and which is in addition to the many millions we gave in charity to feed the Belgians during the war, Uncle Sam could create a system of new motor roads, zigzagging this way and that, taking in almost every principal city of the United States. The road might start at Boston and go via New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, through Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Cincinnati, and on through Louisville, Nashville, Memphis and Birmingham to New Orleans. This first lap is less than 2,000 miles.

From New Orleans the fine new highway could be pushed on to Dallas and El Paso and thence over the mountains to Los Angeles, north to San Francisco, Portland and Seattle, and still not use up the 4,000 miles which, for easy figuring, we will estimate for the next lap. From Seattle it could run on east over the Cascades to Spokane, and thence over the Rockies on to St. Paul, a distance of less than 2,000 miles, where, turning south, it might take in Sioux City, Omaha, Kansas City and St. Louis and again reach New Orleans, with perhaps 2,000 miles more.

The fourth section would be another 1,000 miles of the best road road going from New Orleans northward through the Mississippi valley to Chicago, taking in Peoria and perhaps Indianapolis, and extending from Chicago east to Detroit and along the shore of Lake Erie to Toledo, Cleveland and Buffalo, and thence going on to Albany and Boston, easily covered in an allotment of 1,500 miles more.

So far we have used up less than 13,000 miles of our new automobile highway. We might double its length, and, could we bridge the Atlantic, still have enough money left for a road from Boston to Panama and run two tracks through our zone along the canal. Or, suppose we could bridge the Pacific, the extra 15,000 miles would allow us to motor on our own roadway from San Francisco via Honolulu to Manila, with more than 8,000 miles over to take in Guam and Samoa and the Hawaiian Islands on the way back.

All this might be done with the money we have loaned to the Belgians, which I, for one, hope they will pay. They are supposed to get it back as a first lien on the German reparations, and much of what they have already received is now going into new roads. Would it not be better from now on for Uncle Sam to spend more of his money on our public roads rather than lend it to other countries to use in making their highways about the best paved on earth?

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AS to the highways of France and Belgium, I know whereof I speak. During the past month or so I have motored through a great part of France, and within the past fortnight have been motoring back and forth across little Belgium, making at times more than 200 miles in one day. Some of my travels have been in a Benz limousine, left here by the Germans—a seven-passenger car of fifty horsepower, with a first-class Belgian chauffeur, named Jules. We have made, as a rule, about thirty miles an hour, and all the way have found good roads of macadam or well paved with stone blocks.

Belgium has enough public roads to reach twice as far as from Philadelphia to San Francisco, notwithstanding the country all told is not much longer one way than from Baltimore to New York and not much wider than the distance between Philadelphia and Baltimore. It covers an area about one-fourth that of Pennsylvania. It is less than one-third the size of Indiana and only a little larger than Massachusetts with Delaware added thereto. The land for the most part is flat, although the Ardenne mountains at the southeast rise in places to the height of the Blue Ridge of Virginia. Belgium, like Holland, is made up largely of the rich earth washings brought down by rivers and streams from the high lands, and it is cut up by canals. We crossed a canal every few miles, and this necessitates bridges which in most cases are of stone or concrete. There are more than 1,000 miles of canals and five rivers that are used as commercial waterways. The Scheldt, which would not be considered a large stream in the United States, has on its banks three cities—Antwerp, Ghent and Tournai. It has been a water highway for centuries, and boats were paying toll upon it as far back as A. D. 1000. The freight now carried by water runs annually into the hundreds of millions of tons, and in some years to more than 1,000,000,000. There are five ship canals, having a length, all told, sixteen miles greater than our big ditch at Panama. In addition, there is a network of railways a little less than 5,000 miles long, which it is now proposed to electrify.

From this you will see that your mortgage on Belgium covers a live, going concern, and that the property, although small, is one of the richest and safest of the twenty international loans we have made.

But we can see all this better from our Benz limousine. The car weighs two tons, and its cushions are soft, for they were made for a high German general and well cared for during the war. We ask Jules to throw back the top and speed up the motor. We go like the wind and feel richer than Rockefeller as we fly along over a roadway of square stone blocks. Rockefeller cannot buy a more comfortable car, a brighter sky, nor lungs that can breathe better the champagne of this air. According to current reports, he has no easy stomach, and I am sure he has never seen more beautiful views than those we are now passing through.

The country is one vast truck garden, cut into small fields, now covered with the richest of crops. There are no fences, and the grass, grain and vegetables extend on and on, with green trees lining the roads as far as our eyes can reach. The crops are even heavier than those we saw in France. The shocks in the wheat fields are so thick they stand out like soldiers dressed in the yellow uniform of Belgium. In places they have been carried to the sides of the fields, so as not to interfere with the plowing, which often results here in two crops a year.

See how well-kept everything is. There are no weeds anywhere. There are no tools lying about, and the grain is protected in shock and in stack. Those oats shocks on our right are each made up of eight sheaves with cap sheaves on top. The wheat shocks on our left are capped the same way. The sheaves are small and the straw is long. Each sheaf is as big around as a three-gallon bucket, and when I lean one against my knees it reaches as high as my waist. The grain is exceedingly heavy, for the production here per acre of wheat, oats, barley, rye and potatoes exceeds that of any other civilized country. The wheat yield is thirty-seven bushels per acre, while our average is only fifteen. Before the war Belgium imported about three-fourths of her wheat, but her production of other foodstuffs, including meat, was sufficient for the whole population, and she exported sugar, potatoes, draft horses, fruit and vegetables. She produced more than 600,000,000 pounds of beet sugar this year.

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DURING the war the Germans carried away 92,000 horses, 560,000 cattle, 350,000 pigs and 1,630,000 fowls. They have since brought back more than 14,000 horses, 70,000 cattle and 54,000 fowls. The country has now more than 200,000 horses, 1,500,000 cattle and almost 1,000,000 pigs.

But to return to the crops through which we are passing. Here and there we see a wheat stack. It is beautifully shaped and the cap is so made that it looks almost like thatch. It is tied on with two rows of straw rope. The same care is taken as to the flax, which is one of the great crops of Belgium, its linen industry being famous all over the world. The flax is cut with sickles and the little stalks, not much bigger than knitting needles, are propped up against one another so that they look like so many yellow dunce caps. After drying they are put up in sheaves of double story, like the wheat and oats, all carefully capped and later are carried in huge carts to the mills near the streams in which the flax must be rotted to get out the fiber. Belgium makes quantities of linen, and she exports more than $10,000,000 worth of flax in one year.

As we go on we pass fields of potatoes which are growing 300 bushels per acre, patches of barley which yield fifty bushels and great quantities of green hops trained on tall poles. This is a land of good beer which now costs about 10 cents a pint. It is greedily drunken, for so far prohibition has not corked up the thirsty Belgium throat.

But Jules has stopped our automobile at the side of the road to allow a caravan of teams dragging huge wagons of wheat to pass by. Each wagon holds from three to five tons, but two horses pull it with ease over these smooth Belgium blocks. Some teams haul two loaded wagons, the tongue of the second tied to the back of the first. The wagons themselves weigh half a ton, and some are so heavily loaded that an American team could not budge them on one of the rough country roads of the states.

The horses are enormous. They look like elephants in horsehide, and some of the best will weigh a ton each. I see even bigger horses pulling the drays of the cities and ports. They still compete with the trucks. Before the war draft stallions to a value of $10,000,000 per annum were annually exported from here to Great Britain. Oxen also are used, and even cows, donkeys and some American mules which were left over from the world war. There are but few tractors, although they are gradually coming in to those parts of the country where the soil is heavy, and to farms of 100 acres or more. The principal work for which they are employed is in deep plowing.

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ONE of the surprising features of our travel through Belgium is the multitude of small farms and also the intensive cultivation. Before the war out of less than 7,500,000 acres of total area about 5,000,000 acres were tilled. Much of the ground is worked with the hoe and the spade, and no less than one-sixth of the people are classed as agricultural laborers. Out of every 100 persons employed on the farms only sixteen are paid wages. The others are proprietors or members of the family, most of whom live in farm villages of one or two story brick houses, whence they go out to work their small patches of land.

As to the size of the holdings, the average tract to each laborer is only four acres, while in other lands it is from thirty to one hundred acres, and as time goes on these farms will grow smaller and smaller unless there is a change in the inheritance laws. I have discussed this subject with one of the leading real estate lawyers of Brussels. He tells me that a man must leave one-fourth of his property to his wife, and that the balance must be divided among his children, according to the number he has, only a fixed portion being left that he may will away. If he has but one child, half of the residue after his wife has her fourth goes to that child, and he may will away the remainder. If he has two children, one-third of the balance goes to each child, and he has one-third to leave as he pleases. If he has three children or more, he can dispose of only one-fourth of the balance after his wife has her share, and the remainder must be divided equally among the children.

Suppose, for instance, a man dies leaving a 120-acre farm. Thirty acres must go to the wife, and if he has but one child it gets forty-five acres and the remaining forty-five acres can be disposed of by will. If the man has four children, the wife still receives her thirty acres, but he can devise only twenty-two and a half acres or one-fourth of that remaining, and the rest (sixty-seven and one-half acres) must be divided equally among the four children, giving each child less than seventeen acres. If he has six children, each child would receive a little more than eleven acres. As every child wants, if possible, an outlet to the road, the fields facing the highways are often mere ribbons.

In my future letters I shall write concerning other aspects of your mortgage on Belgium.

(Carpenter's World Travels. Copyright, 1922, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

"BELGIUM IS FAMOUS FOR ITS BREEDS OF HEAVY DRAFT HORSES, BUT NOT EVEN THESE FINE ANIMALS COULD PULL SUCH BIG LOADS OF FLAX WERE IT NOT FOR THE SMOOTH, HARD ROADS."

"THE SMALL FARMS OF BELGIUM LEAD THE WORLD IN WHEAT, PRODUCING 37 BUSHELS TO THE ACRE, AS AGAINST AN AVERAGE YIELD OF 15 BUSHELS IN THE UNITED STATES. THE GRAIN STACKS LOOK LIKE HUTS."

Appeals to Ford Total Six Million Dollars a Month

Many Persons Among Those Who Seek Financial Assistance for Various Causes Ask for Motor Cars—Bishop Wanted Two Carloads of Cars for Missions in Order That Work Might Be Greatly Increased—Ford Seldom Places Money Gift in Any Manner That Puts It Beyond His Personal Interest or Direction—Insists Upon Self-Support.

BY S. S. MARQUIS, D. D.

(Continued from last Sunday.)

THE following story told by a man who was not in the employ of the company will serve to illustrate what I know was the effect of the spirit of the company upon its employes in hundreds of instances:

"Beside me in a street car," so the story runs, "there sat a man past fifty years of age. He was a foreigner, and by the badge he wore I knew he was a Ford employe. A woman entered the car with two small children. Both children were poorly clad. Their stockings were full of holes, their shoes worn. The mother took the smallest of the children on her lap, and by doing so exposed two large holes in the knees of the child's stockings. She made attempts to cover these holes, but the little dress was too short to conceal them. Each time the mother tried to hide the holes the old man next to me shifted restlessly in his seat. Presently the woman got off the car and the old man followed her. My curiosity was aroused, and I also followed. At the curb he spoke to her. I could not hear what he said, but from gestures made toward the little ones, I gathered that he was interested in them. After talking with the woman for a few minutes he accompanied her to a nearby store. I followed and stood at a distance so that they would not know they were being observed. Stockings, shoes and rubbers were purchased. Also some underwear, and a coat for the smaller child. He left the store with the woman, doffed his cap to her at the door and said 'Good-bye.' The woman stood dazed, apparently unable to express the gratitude she felt. I followed the man and spoke to him.

"'That your daughter?' I asked.

"'Who?' he said.

"'The woman with the babies.'

"'No, I don't know her. But did you see dem poor kids? I got myself four children, and was poor like that. Now I work at Ford's and make good living. When I see dem poor kids it make me think of mine, and I help 'em a little bit.'

"'What was the woman's name?'

"'I don't know.'

"'Where does she live?'

"'I no ask her.'

"'What is your name?'

"He looked at me sharply and said, 'You one of dem newspaper men. You write it in de paper. My wife find out, and I catch hell. She no believe me and get jealous. I no give my name.'

"I endeavored to convince him that he was mistaken. It was no use. He hurried away, looking back occasionally to see if I were following him."

There was something in the spirit of those days that called out of men the finest and best in them. One caught a glimpse of a new era in industry. And perhaps the dawn is there—behind the clouds.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FORD CHARITIES.

MR. FORD hates the word charity and all that it stands for. He gives generously to friends and employes, but it is in recognition of services rendered. He gives neither a stone nor money to the man who asks bread, but a job.

"No man ever helped another by giving money," he insists.

I have heard him say that the only man on whom he ever bestowed a charity was ruined by it. The amount given in this case was, as I recall it, about $17. The investment of that $17 has saved him millions. Just another example of a wise use of money for which he has become famous.

Mr. Ford has no use for the ordinary channels of charity and philanthropy. Such matters are taken care of by other members of the family. To the Red Cross, the community fund, to people destitute on account of sickness or the infirmity of years and to many charitable institutions Mrs. Ford and Edsel give generously.

Thousands of people, high and low, great and small, known and unknown, make pilgrimages to Detroit to obtain money from Mr. Ford for every conceivable object under the sun. Many thousands more write letters asking his financial support. It is railroad fare and postage wasted.

A great deal of my time, before I went with the Ford Motor Company and since, has been taken up by people out to get money from Mr. Ford, and who insist that either I put their case up to him or obtain for them an interview in order that they may plead their own cause. As a matter of curiosity I kept for a time a record of the sums thus sought. The total was close to $4,000,000 a year.

The requests for money coming into his own office average, so I have been informed, over $6,000,000 a month.

One reuest that frequently came under my notice was for a Ford car. The entire output of the factory, it often seemed to me, would hardly meet the demand if every request were to be granted. Charitable, religious and philanthropic institutions and organizations were in need of a Ford runabout or truck—possibly two or three of them, or even forty or fifty of them—right away. Sometimes it was a member of the parish who wanted to "surprise our dear minister" by making him a present of a car. Not infrequently the minister made bold to state his own needs. One bishop wrote asking that two carloads of runabouts be sent to him at once. He had in his diocese a large number of missions and a small number of missionaries. Give each of them a runabout and their work could be quadrupled. It was a fine idea. But it was not altogether original. We had been confronted with something like it before. But it required more than one letter to convince the good bishop that if the thought was an inspired one, then inspiration as to the value of Ford runabouts, sedans and trucks in religious, charitable and philanthropic work had become too general for the Ford Motor Company alone to cope with it. It was necessary to sell a few cars in order to keep going.

Next to a runabout for the parson seemed to be the need for "a bell for our new church." One was almost forced to the conclusion that if every parson had a Ford car, and every church a bell, the pressing religious problems of the country would be at an end.

A man of wealth is confronted by no problem more difficult than that of making a wise use of a portion of his wealth for charitable purposes. To give to ease one's conscience or to avoid criticism is not a difficult matter. It can be done by a man who has plenty of money without thought of sacrifice.

ONE OF THE FEW PHOTOGRAPHS OF MRS. HENRY FORD.

MR. FORD once made a contribution toward the furnishing of a building which I was fitting out for recreational purposes. When he was making out the check for the sum pledged he paused and, looking up at me, said: "I might as well make this out for a thousand or two more while I am at it." "No," I replied, "the amount you are giving is sufficient. I am not going to expend more than is necessary just because I can get it." "Well," he said, "if you want more you might as well have it. The gift of money means nothing to me. The only thing I can give you that would mean anything would be my time."

Mr. Ford seldom places a gift in the way of money in a manner that puts it beyond his personal interest and direction. He took over a hospital at a time when it was in financial difficulties. He put millions into it. But before doing so he paid back to others who had previously put money into the institution their contributions in full. "If I am to support that hospital, then I am going to control it," he said to me.

As to the manner of using his money for the benefit of others, Henry Ford has his own ideas. They are not of the conventional sort. Few of his ideas are. His theory that wealth should be amassed in a way that will not create poverty, and so make charity necessary; that the profits of industry are not so much of a private and personal affair as to justify any one man in making even a philanthropic distribution of them; that the proper disposition of such profits is to put them back into industry for the benefit of labor, is a theory so near fundamentally sound that I cannot see much to justify the criticism that is made of it. Its weakness, it appears to me, is that it overlooks the fact that we have not yet reached the industrial millennium in which there is work for all all the time; that accident or old age may render even a Ford employe helpless in the struggle for existence; that there are thousands of peopde in this world now, and thousands more will yet be born, mentally and physically unequal to do anything that will give them adequate support. Charity of the kind that Henry Ford decries, and which we all decry for that matter, is, as things are, a necessity, and there seems to be no good reason why he should not bear his portion of it. His failure to do so, however, should not blind us to the great good he is doing in his own way. We could even afford to have a few more billionaires like him. But until the millennium arrives we need a few people of means who will accept our modern organized charity as one of the necessary evils, and give it their support.

In accordance with Mr. Ford's idea as to the best way to help the other fellow, two rules were fundamental in the sociological department of the company. The first was that no problem was to be solved by the use of money when the solution could be reached through work. The second was that no case should be undertaken that could not be put ultimately upon a self-supporting basis.

Thousands of cases of destitution were relieved by giving the head of the family, or some member of it, employment. There was a time when all applicants for employment were looked up before they were hired in, and preference was given to the most needy, to men of large families rather than to men with few dependents, and to married men rather than to single men.

The fact that special consideration was given to old men and cripples brought hundreds of applications from these classes. It was impossible, of course, to take on all who applied, but every effort was made to find places for as many as possible. It was necessary to select special jobs for the old and the physically handicapped. The work must be light and as far removed from danger as possible. I do not recall that a cripple ever received an additional injury while in the employ of the conipany, and the only instance on record of injury to an old man was the case of one who went to sleep and fell off his chair.

Over 1,700 cripples were in the employ of the company at the outbreak of the war. In addition to these, some four or five thousand more men, disabled more or less by disease, and who for that reason would be rejected by industry, were on its pay roll. After the war the company agreed to take a thousand handicapped men as fast as they came out of hospitals.

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Let one suppose that all this was done as a charity in the ordinary sense of that word. The company prided itself on the fact that it could place these men so that they could earn the wage paid them. Cripples, because of the difficulty they experience in getting a job, as a rule show their appreciation by doing well the work given them. By way of illustration I recall the case of a blind man hired in and put to work. A few days later his foreman brought two men with perfect vision and sound of body to the employment manager: "Here," said the foreman, "take these men and transfer them to some other department. I don't need them. That blind man you gave me the other day is doing their work and his, too, and they are only in his way. And what's more, he keeps singing all the time he is working." He had been a piano tuner. He came to my office and told me his story. He had been able to make enough money to buy food, but friends or family had to help out from time to time in the matter of clothes and room rent. He would like a chance to make his own way in the world. It was given him. And he made good.

Mr. Ford lifted to the level of self-support hundreds of people who otherwise would have been living on the charity of others.

Employes ill and in hospitals, with their savings exhausted, had their hospital bills paid by the company, and in addition to this a weekly allowance, equal to half pay, was given the family. I have known hospital care at the expense of the company to extend in some instances over a period of more than two years. Just so long as the physician stated the man had a chance to recover and return to work he was regarded as a Ford man and was taken care of. In all cases where it was possible, however, some member of the family of a sick employe was given work until the employe himself was able to re-

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